(c) the names of voluntary organisations selected in Bihar for this work during the current financial year?

THE MINISTER OF WELFARE (SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA) : (a) The Ministry of Welfare does not provide grants for construction of Old Age Homes.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Does not arise.

Soil Testing Campaign

674. PROF. PREM SINGH CHANDUMAJRA :
SHRI MOHAN RAWALE
SHRI NITISH KUMAR :
SHRI SANDIPAN THORAT :

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have decided to launch a campaign for the soil testing with a view to increase the rate of agricultural production in the country;

(b) if so, the details of the scheme formulated in this regard indicating the number of soil testing centres proposed to be set up in each State;

(c) the time by which the said scheme is targeted to be completed in the whole country; and

(d) the estimated total expenditure likely to be incurred on its implementation?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) to (d) Government decided long ago to promote establishment of soil testing laboratories under a scheme called Balanced and Integrated Use of Fertilizers wherein a component of giving assistance to State Governments to the tune of Rs. 8.65 lakhs for strengthening of each soil testing laboratory in their respective states Government also introduced a new component since 1995-96 for taking up front-line demonstrations on soil test based crop response methodology jointly by State Governments on soil test based crop response methodology jointly by State Governments. ICAR Institutes and State Agricultural Universities. 38 Soil Testing Laboratories have so far been strengthened under this scheme.

[English]

Rain Fall in Orissa

675. SHRI BHAKTA CHARAN DAS : Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government are aware of the fact that more than 75 percent crops has been damaged due to scanty rain fall in Orissa particularly in Kalahandi and Naupara districts during the current year;

(b) if not, the facts in this regard alongwith the details of rain fall in these districts during the said period; and

(c) the financial assistance allocated and actually released for these districts in particular from Natural Calamities relief fund, so far?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (EXCLUDING THE DEPARTMENT OF ANIMAL HUSBANDRY AND DAIRYING) (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA) : (a) and (b). According to the information received from the Government of Orissa, out of 39.96 lakh hectares of Kharif paddy during the current year, 18.14 lakh hectares has been affected in varying degrees including 9.55 lakh hectares where the loss is more than 50 per cent due to inadequate rains. In Kalahandi district 98 out of 2201 villages and in Nuapada district 68 out of 659 villages sustained crop loss of more than 75 per cent.

(c) Orissa has a Calamity Relief Fund (CRF) allocation of Rs. 49.01 crores during 1996-97 consisting of a Central share of Rs. 36.76 crores and States share of Rs. 12.52 crores. Government of India have already released its entire share of Rs. 363.76 crores including the fourth instalment amounting to Rs. 9.19 crores in advance in view of the drought conditions. Following the visit of the Prime Minister an amount of Rs. 30.00 crores has also been released for poverty alleviation and employment generation purposes. A Central Team has also visited the State to make an assessment of the drought condition and of the need for additional assistance from the National Fund for Calamity Relief.

[Translation]

Creation of Smaller States

676. SHRIMATI CHHABILA ARVIND NETAM :
SHRI NARAYAN ATHAWALAY :
SHRI TARIQ ANWAR :

Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have formulated any policy for constituting the smaller States;

(b) if so, the names of the States under consideration for the purpose;

(c) whether the Government propose to prepare a time bound programme in this regard;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI MOHD. MAQBOOL DAR) : (a) to (e). The Government is in favour of devolution of powers and decentralisation of authority in political, administrative and economic spheres. No policy has been formulated for constituting smaller states.